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ABSTRACT

Programs funded through the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act sex equity set aside are required to provide occupational education in high wage, high skill, and nontraditional careers. Equity standards in New Jersey have been developed by the Gender Equity Coordinator in conjunction with the three statewide Career Equity Assistance Centers. This bulletin, one of a series reporting on Perkins Act funding in New Jersey, reports on the change in knowledge concerning equity standards for participants in single parent/displaced homemaker and sex equity programs. Data were collected from 113 program participants in program year 1995 through a survey testing knowledge of equity standards. All groups showed an increase in scores between the pre- and posttests, although that increase was not significant for all ethnic groups and ages. Posttest scores demonstrated that every group showed more knowledge concerning sex equity as a result of program participation. It is recommended that sex equity programs be continued and expanded so that more participants can benefit from them. Increased opportunities for participation in activities that increase knowledge of gender equity are essential. (Contains 3 figures and 8 refernces.) (SLD)

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# EQUITY STANDARDS: CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE.

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# RESEARCH BULLETIN

NEW JERSEY
**CAREER EQUITY ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION**

Fall, 1995 LIFE SKILLS CENTER, MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY Research Bulletin No. 12


## EQUITY STANDARDS: CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE


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*The Office of Bilingual Education and Equity Issues, New Jersey Department of Education, through funding from the Carl D. Perkins Act sex equity set aside sponsors single parent/displaced homemaker and gender equity programs throughout the state. As one component of the evaluation, program participants take a series of pre and post tests. The results are analyzed independently by the Career Equity Assistance Center (CEAC) for Research and Evaluation at Montclair State University. This bulletin represents one in a series of four reports on test results for Program Year 1995. Other bulletins present results on tests for self esteem, knowledge of technical careers and sex role stereotyping.*



UD030915


### PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS INCREASE KNOWLEDGE OF EQUITY STANDARDS

Programs funded by the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, P.L. 101-392 sex equity set aside, provide a variety of services designed to increase knowledge of equity standards. Lack of knowledge of equity information may be one factor that limits career choices. Increasing knowledge levels could benefit both males and females personally, professionally, and financially.

This bulletin reports the change in knowledge concerning equity standards of participants of single parent/displaced homemaker and sex equity programs funded by the Perkins Act. In New Jersey, these programs are administered by the Office of Bilingual Education and Equity Issues of the New Jersey Department of Education.

### BACKGROUND

In New Jersey, equity standards have been developed by the Gender Equity Coordinator in conjunction with the three statewide Career Equity Assistance Centers. Gender equity can be defined as an environment in which individuals can consider options and make decisions based on their abilities, regardless of gender role stereotypes and expectations. Lack of gender equity can be attributed to sex bias, sex role stereotyping, and sex discrimination. This bulletin presents the results of initial research concerning knowledge of equity standards.

Gender stereotypes, including the classification of masculine and feminine characteristics and the identification of gender subtypes, have been reported extensively in the literature (Ashmore, et al, 1986; Harris, 1994; Six and Eckes, 1991). The effectiveness of programs designed to change attitudes concerning sex role stereotypes has been documented previously (Bernstein, Coté-Bonanno and Reilly, 1992; Manning, 1993). Programs funded by the Perkins Act sex equity set aside in New Jersey in Program Year 1994 reported changes toward more equitable attitudes on one component of stereotyping, equity in the professions, for most categories of program participants (Bernstein, Coté-Bonanno, Reilly, Carver and Doremus, 1995).

As a result of stereotyping and bias, females often choose occupations which have been traditionally classified as feminine. In general, careers dominated by men pay higher salaries than those traditionally held by women. The Institute for Women's Leadership (1993) reported that in 1990, 68% of New Jersey women worked in gender segregated clerical, service and sales jobs, earning less, with fewer benefits, status and security than "men's" jobs.

Programs offered through the Perkins Act sex equity set aside in New Jersey are consistent with the *Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education in New Jersey*. One of the most relevant relationships between the Strategic Plan and the Perkins Act programs pertain to identifying corrective actions to address educational inequities resulting from gender discrimination and bias. Programs designed to increase knowledge of equity standards are addressing economic disparity based on gender.

## METHOD OF STUDY

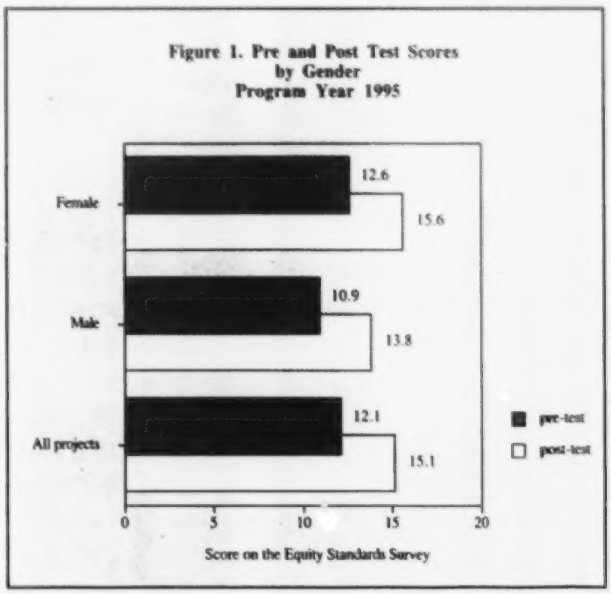
Data was collected from clients enrolled in single parent/displaced homemaker and gender equity programs throughout New Jersey during the Program Year 1995. Matched pre and post tests were collected from 113 participants.

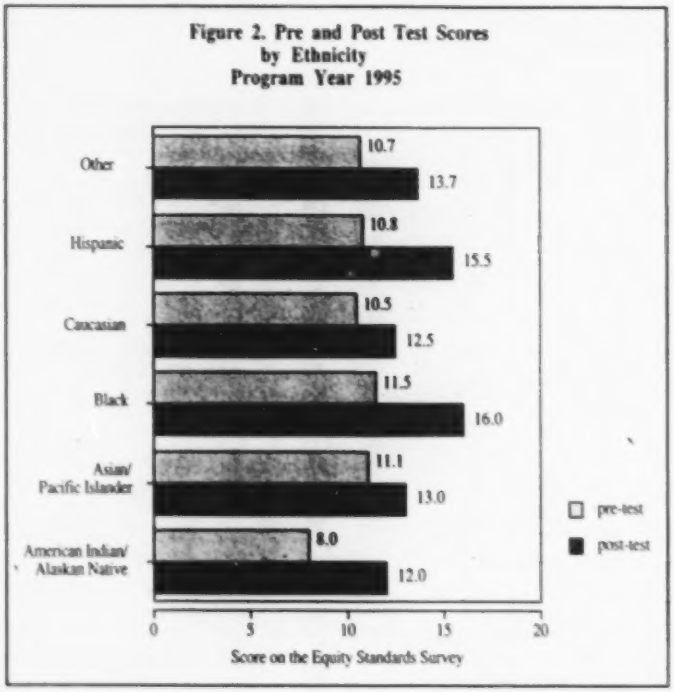
The Equity Standards Survey was developed by the New Jersey Gender Equity Coordinator in cooperation with statewide Career Equity Assistance Centers specifically for use in the single parent/displaced homemaker and gender equity programs in New Jersey. The survey consists of 20 questions, pertaining to knowledge of several different aspects of equity. Each item was scored for correctness with a total possible score of 20.

Survey forms were administered to all clients prior to the beginning of any program. Post tests were administered six weeks after the completion of that part of the program pertaining to equity standards. Completed tests were scored by program personnel and the results forwarded for analysis to the CEAC for Research and Evaluation at Montclair State University.

## FINDINGS

The majority of the sample (68%) were females. Participants ranged in age from 14 years to over 46 years of age. The largest portion of this group, 19%, were between 16 and 17 years of age. Thirty two percent of participants classified themselves as Cauca-





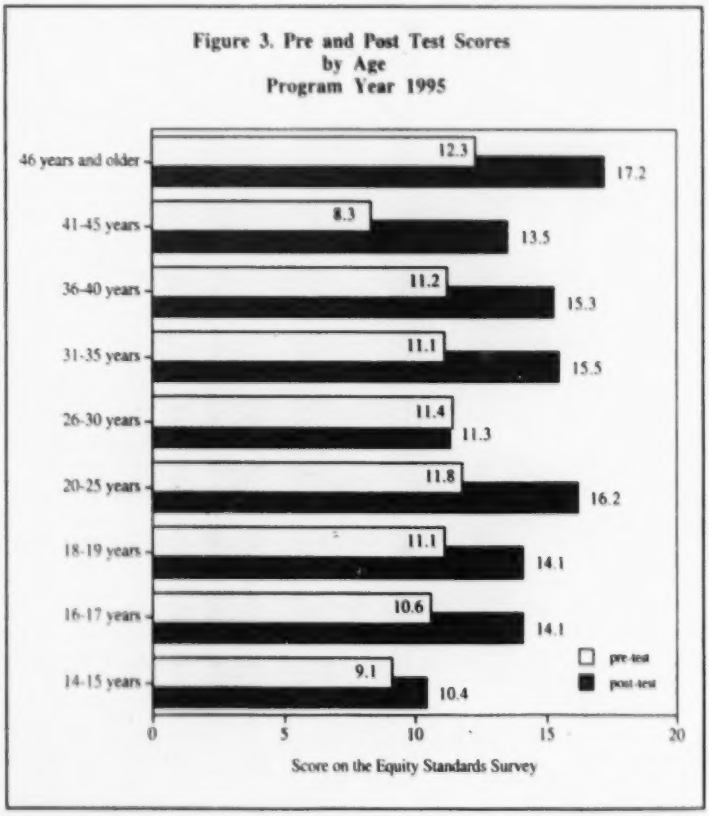

Mean post test scores were higher than mean pre test scores for all ethnic classifications. These differences were significant for participants who classified themselves as Black, Caucasian, and Hispanic. Mean post test scores were also higher than mean pre test scores for other participants in other ethnic groups, but these changes were not significant (see Figure 2).

Black participants had the highest mean post test score (M16) which represents a correct response rate of 80%. Hispanic participants had the second highest mean posts test scores (M15.5) which represents a correct response rate of 78% and also the largest difference between the mean

sian, 27% as Black and 25% as Hispanic.

Mean test scores were significantly higher on the post test than on the pre test for participants from all programs combined and for males and for females analyzed separately (see Figure 1). On the pre test, mean scores for males were considerably lower than for females. Since the change in score between the pre and post test was almost equal for males and females, the mean post test score for males (M13.8) was still lower than the mean post test score for females (M15.6).

Mean post test scores for all programs combined reflect a correct response rate of 76%. The mean correct response rate on the post test scores was higher for females (78%) than for males (69%).



pre test score and the mean post score (D4.7).

Test scores were analyzed by age for 2 year increments for participants aged 14-19 years and for 5 year increments for ages 20-45 years. The mean post test scores were significantly higher than mean pre test scores for seven of the nine age ranges analyzed. The only age groups which did not show significant increases between the mean pre and post test score were 14-15 year olds and 26-30 year olds (see Figure 3).

The participants in the 46 years and over range had the highest mean post test score (M17.2) which represents a correct response rate of 86%. The participants in the 14-15 year age range had the lowest mean post test score (M10.4).

## DISCUSSION

The participants in programs for single parent/displaced homemakers and in gender equity programs in New Jersey had increased scores on the Equity Standards Survey during Program Year 1995.

All groups showed an increase in scores between the pre and the post tests, although that increase was not significant for all ethnic groups and ages. Post test scores demonstrate that every group showed more knowledge concerning sex equity as a result of program participation. Therefore, increased opportunities for participation in activities that increase knowledge of gender equity are essential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

***Sex equity programs should be continued and expanded so that more participants can benefit from them.*** The wide range of opportunities and services offered by these programs include:

- ✔ ASETS (Achieving Sex Equity Through Students) workshops,
- ✔ Saturday workshops that focus on nontraditional careers,
- ✔ role model panels and
- ✔ life skills programs, such as New Beginnings Survival Skills.

At a time when New Jersey's educational system is emphasizing the importance of gender equity by the inclusion of this concept in the *Strategic Plan for Systemic Improvement of Education in New Jersey*, the continuation and expansion of the sex equity set aside programs is of particular importance.

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